

National Ocean Service Senior Management Council

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The National Ocean Service is changing to become a more effective NOAA focus on coastal stewardship. As part of the change, NOS needs a clear vision of where it wants to be in the next ten years and must develop a corporate roadmap for how to get there. A NOS Senior Management Council has been established to provide the Assistant Administrator of NOS with advice and recommendations on NOS strategic directions and priorities. Specifically, the Council will develop guidance for NOS strategic, implementation, and operational planning; budget formulation and execution; human and financial resource allocations; legislative issues, communications and outreach, and organizational development. The Senior Management Council also will ensure that programs are implemented to achieve corporate NOS goals and not simply individual program or Line Office goals. The Assistant Administrator is responsible for all final decisions.

This document describes the principles by which the Senior Management Council will operate; the Council's roles and responsibilities; the process for decisionmaking, including issues requiring the Council's consideration; and recommends the composition of and procedures for the Council.

Operating Principles

The Senior Management Council will operate under the following principles:

Management

- Operate with a NOS and NOAA corporate view and ensure that all communications foster a corporate image.
- Work toward a shared vision and values; an understanding of and commitment to NOAA's coastal stewardship mission throughout the organization.
- Foster accountability at all levels within NOS and ensure flexibility to accommodate changing priorities, resources, legal mandates, and technologies.
- Ensure and maintain excellence in NOS products and services and encourage and reward innovation that increases our effectiveness in science, service, and management activities.

Planning

- Encourage activities that achieve multiple strategic and organizational goals.
- Seek opportunities through internal and external partnerships to leverage capabilities and resources, and to transfer technology.
- Provide programmatic stability to sustain high priority, on-going activities and cultivate new strategic initiatives that will result in maximum benefits to the nation.
- Ensure proper investment among NOS's mission programs and balance among operational programs, research, and infrastructure.
- Ensure and maintain balance between short and long-term research to improve NOAA's products and services.
- Design and plan programs in coordination with broad constituencies and keep them well informed of NOS's programs, products, and services.

Communications

- Maintain effective "top-down" and "bottom-up" communications to fully inform and engage all NOS employees.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Senior Management Council at a minimum of twelve months after initiation so that recommendations for improvement can be provided to the Assistant Administrator.

- Encourage cross-program communication and cooperation within NOS and NOAA to effectively use personnel and financial resources to achieve joint objectives and to eliminate redundancy.
- Seek to transfer sound scientific information to the public; and between scientists and managers/policy makers to ensure that the science needs of management programs are met.

Human Resource Development

- Foster recruitment and development of a diverse, world-class workforce and foster mutual trust and respect among employees.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Senior Management Council will advise the Assistant Administrator and develop guidance for NOS line offices regarding:

Planning and Evaluation

- NOAA Strategic Planning and NOS Strategic and Implementation Planning
- 5-Year Implementation Plans for relevant NOAA Strategic Goals (e.g., SHC, PSN, BSF, RPS, AST)
- Setting NOS strategic goals and objectives
- Key actions to achieve NOS goals and objectives
- NOS Annual Operating Plans that conform to strategic goals, objectives, and priorities
- Priorities for base programs and new initiatives (budget increases) for input to the 5-year implementation planning and budget formulation processes
- Evaluation of program performance for results, consistency with existing plans, effectiveness, efficiency, and customer/constituent satisfaction
- Integration of activities across NOS programs and with other NOAA programs (e.g., international activities, other strategic planning teams and program offices)

Transition

- Transition Planning to implement NOS corporate goals and objectives
- Evaluation of policies and protocols for transition programs
- Coordination between NOS planning and transition activities

Budget

- Formulation of future budget requests
- Appropriations strategy
- Current fiscal year budget execution

Resource Allocation

- FTE allocation process
- NOS/NOAA overhead and reprogramming
- Information technology
- Investment and balance among operational programs, science, and infrastructure needs

Legislative Issues

- NOS fiscal year legislative agenda
- Reauthorization of NOS-administered laws
- Authorizing legislation for NOS programs
- Other relevant legislation

Communications, Outreach, and Corporate Image

- Constituent and customer input and feedback on NOS strategic planning, products, and services
- Effective internal and external communications throughout NOS

Human, Organization, and Culture Development

- Development of necessary staff capabilities through training, education, and cross-program exchanges

Process for Decisionmaking

The Senior Management Council will meet as often as weekly throughout the year to discuss issues related to the roles and responsibilities described previously. The Council may create task teams to perform specific activities, such as collecting, synthesizing, and organizing information on particular topics. The Council also may rely on staff support to help organize information prepared by transition task teams, planning teams, and program offices. Senior Management Council members will review pertinent information, provide specific recommendations on a collegial basis, and ensure that recommendations are clearly presented to the Assistant Administrator for a decision. If consensus cannot be reached on specific issues, dissenting opinions will be presented to the Assistant Administrator for consideration.

The Council will have a written briefing memorandum prepared that outlines the issues, criteria considered, recommendations, and when a final decision is needed. Once the Assistant Administrator makes a final decision, the Council will be responsible for any follow-up actions, e.g., directing designated staff or task teams to prepare guidance or memorandums and distributing them to the appropriate parties, as necessary.

Budget Planning & Formulation Activities

There are a series of annual budget formulation and planning milestones that must be met for the Administration to submit a budget to Congress in February for the upcoming Fiscal Year. Some of these milestones will require full Senior Management Council involvement and are described and charted (Figure 1). In addition, other decisions about target allowances, overheads, Annual Operating Plans, etc., are required prior to the start of a given Fiscal Year. These decisions may also trigger involvement of the Council.

Planning and Budget Formulation Process

Shortly after receiving an appropriation for the current fiscal year (FY X—e.g., 1998) and the OMB “passback” of the next fiscal year proposed (FY X+1—e.g., 1999) budget in late November, the NOS Assistant Administrator will convene the Senior Management Council to initiate the planning process for the following fiscal year (FY X+2—e.g., 2000). Using the best information available, including (but not limited to) DOC, NOAA, and NOS strategic plans and known Presidential priorities, the Council will consider the status of NOS programs, the national need for the NOS services, input and support from constituency groups, and any other information to identify NOS priorities for the new budget cycle and how the priorities will be “championed” within the NOAA budget formulation and planning process (e.g., by Line Office, Strategic Teams, etc.).

The decisions from this meeting should include, at minimum, the following:

1. NOS program priorities for the upcoming budget cycle;

2. Assignments for Strategic Team leads and other staff for the preparation of budget narratives, funding profiles for the year in question, and outyears;
3. Schedule/plan for constituency interaction and outreach.

The rest of the planning cycle begins officially when NOAA passes Department of Commerce guidance to the Strategic Planning Teams and Line Offices, usually in late January or early February for the preparation of the NOAA budget, which is submitted to the Department of Commerce in June of the same year. The milestones in the process are shown in the time line (Figure 1). These points in the planning calendar may require convening of the Council, but at a minimum the Assistant Administrator will need to communicate with the Line Office directors by voice or e-mail on the status of decisions.

Budget Execution and Annual Operating Plan

Another area requiring Senior Management Council involvement is decisions on budget execution. Critical decision points are shown on the time line diagram (Figure 1). Usually in August, before the beginning of the next Fiscal Year, target allowances are provided to NOS by the NOAA Budget Office. NOS allocates funds to the Line Offices based on prior year distributions and overhead rates. The NOS Assistant Administrator will convene a Council Meeting to review and discuss any arguments for or against the budget execution procedure.

When Congress passes the appropriation for the upcoming Fiscal Year, the NOS Assistant Administrator will communicate any changes in funding allocations specified in the appropriation. This communication may involve convening the Council or may be handled by voice or e-mail.

The preparation of the NOS Annual Operating Plan (AOP) also will require the involvement of the Senior Management Council. Review and coordination of performance measures, milestones, etc. between the programmatic components of the Strategic Goals and the Line Offices will be necessary to ensure consistency and integration. NOAA requires implementation of the AOP prior to the beginning of the Fiscal Year. The Council will convene no later than August on AOP matters, but may choose to look at AOP issues earlier in the year. Changes in AOP performance measures and milestones during a given fiscal year may require advice from the Council.

Annual Operating Plan Implementation

A critical component of the planning process is the evaluation of the performance of current year activities. An understanding of program successes and problems is fundamental to preparing for outyear activities. To meet this need, the Senior Management Council will convene to conduct quarterly reviews of the current year's AOP. The Council will discuss overhead and allocation issues and make adjustments as necessary.

Legislative Agenda for NOS Programs

NOS programs may require changes in authorizing and appropriating legislation, as well as special legislation. The Council will consider legislative agenda items in the Fall prior to the beginning of the legislative year, to identify requirements and plan strategies for Congressional staff and constituency briefings.

Council Membership & Procedures

Other Senior Management Council Issues

Other triggers for Council action include personnel policy issues (e.g., FTE downsizing), space allocation issues, urgent funding allocation problems, issues related to internal and external communications, NOS corporate image and outreach activities, development of human resources, and evolution of the NOS corporate culture.

The Senior Management Council is composed of the NOS Assistant Administrator, the NOS Deputy Assistant Administrator, NOS Line Office directors, the Chief of NOS Management and Budget, and the Director of the NOS International Programs Office. When appropriate, “advisory” members may be included to represent pertinent issues, such as the Legislative Agenda, NOAA Strategic Themes, etc.




The Council will operate directly under the guidance of the Assistant Administrator, who will be the Chair. The Chair will be responsible for scheduling and facilitating all Council meetings and activities. In the absence of the Assistant Administrator, the Deputy Assistant Administrator will chair Council meetings.

The Council may create task teams as required. Task teams may be chaired by a member of the Council, and will include members who have knowledge, skills, and expertise related to the specific issue to be addressed. Task teams will be responsible for collecting and organizing information for the Senior Management Council. This includes generating reports and other materials that may contain recommendations for the Council to consider. The task teams will provide regular updates to the Council on their progress, as required.

Staff support will be assigned to the Senior Management Council to help prepare information for the Council’s consideration, record proceedings, and prepare necessary documents.

Figure 1. Topics for consideration and time frame for decisions.

Topics	Timetable												Nature of Decision
	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	
Planning and Budget Formulation Process													
1. Initiate planning and assess Presidential/DOC/NOAA goals as they relate to NOS													
2. Review NOAA FY X+2 budget guidance, constituent workshop results, and proposed team initiatives.													
3. Resolve / Appeal NOAA Passback.								X					Guidance on what criteria to consider when appealing.
4. Resolve DOC "Passback" issues.											X		Guidance on what criteria to consider when appealing.
5. Resolve OMB "passback" issues.													Guidance on what criteria to consider when appealing.
Budget Execution and Annual Operating Plan for FY X+1													
1. Discuss preliminary budget allowances and basis for overhead allocations.													
2. Guide AOP objectives / performance measures / milestones and review AOP integration across NOS components.													
Annual Operating Plan Implementation													
1. Current year AOP quarterly reviews													
Legislation													
1. Map out Legislative Agenda Items based on passbacks.													
Actions that can happen anytime during the year													
Budget Execution for FY X:													
• Resolve allowances/overheads against actual appropriation/conference language.													
FTE Issues:													
• Any personnel policy issues worthy of Council consideration. (e.g. Demonstration Project (salaries), FTE limitations or draw down, etc.)													
• Anytime during FY X, if adjustments or modifications are required.													
Other:													
• Relocation/space allocation													
• Significant reorganization													

 Requires Council Meeting
 Requires Council Communication
 Requires Staff Preparation